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19 July 1948

Dear Admiral Hillenkoetter:

As you know, some time ago the Department of the Army proposed that there be established a special teletype communications circuit among the intelligence organizations of the Departments of the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, State, and the Central Intelligence Agency. It is understood that all agencies enumerated, except the Department of State, have favorably considered the proposal and have taken action to install the necessary equipment. The Department of State has advised the Department of the Army and the other agencies of its decision not to join the separate teletype circuit. This letter is written to inform you of the Department's views of this proposal and the underlying reasons for its decision with respect to it.

The Department is in agreement with the principle of having a secure means of communication among the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy and Air Force and the Central Intelligence Agency. However, because of the organizational pattern of the Department of State and the fact that its intelligence organization performs a somewhat different role from that of the other intelligence organizations in their respective departments, it does not appear necessary or feasible to establish at this time such a separate communications link between the intelligence organization of the Department of State and the other intelligence agencies.

In order that your agency may be informed of the factors leading to the State Department's decision not to join the special teletype circuit, the following comments are submitted:

1. Secure communications between the Department of State and the other intelligence agencies already exist through the "command" channel (which is a secure teletype circuit). In earlier discussions between officials of the Department of State and the other interested agencies, it was specified that the proposed circuit

State Dept. review completed

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would be used only for "crisis-type" messages, and would not be used as a means of informational interchange among analysts or others on the working level. "Crisis-type" messages are already given the highest priority in the "command" channels.

2. Facilities already exist in the Department for processing, and taking action on the basis of, any important information received. Since the policy or operating officials (and not the intelligence organization of the Department) are responsible for action, the Department would not benefit by having such information channelled through the intelligence organization. This is particularly true since, as indicated in the Department of the Army memorandum setting forth the proposal, it was expected that the teletype circuit would be particularly useful on weekends and off-duty hours. The watch officer of the Department of State, who is on duty on a 24-hour, seven-day-week basis in the Division of Communications, is privileged to summon to the Department any Departmental official. Even if personnel were available in the intelligence organization to staff such an operation on a 24-hour, seven-day-week basis, it would represent a duplication in the Department in two respects:
  - a. The watch officer would still receive and process "crisis-type" messages received from the other intelligence agencies along with those received over State Department channel; and
  - b. "Crisis-type" messages from State Department sources invariably are received by the watch officer first and would be transmitted to other interested agencies over the command channel at least as soon as they are sent to the intelligence organization.

You may be assured that every effort is being made in the Department to take action promptly on every message received, and to send to the other interested agencies by the fastest secure means of communication any "crisis-type" information received from State Department sources.

Sincerely yours,

W. Park Armstrong, Jr.

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